

The President's Cabinet

The purpose of the Cabinet is to advise the President on matters relating to the duties of their respective offices. As the President's closest and most trusted advisors, members of the Cabinet attend weekly meetings with the President. The Constitution does not directly mention a "Cabinet," but the Constitutional authority for a Cabinet is found in Article II, Section 2. The Constitution states that the President "may require the opinion, in writing of the principle officer in each of the executive departments, upon any subject relating to the duties of their respective offices." The Constitution does not say which or how many executive departments should be created.

Who makes up the Cabinet?

The Cabinet traditionally includes the Vice President and the heads of 15 executive departments-the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury, and Veterans Affairs, and the Attorney General. Cabinet-level rank has also been given to the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; the Director of the Office of Management and Budget; the Director of the National Drug Control Policy; the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security; and the U.S. Trade Representative.

When requested by the President, other officials are asked to attend these weekly meetings including, the President's Chief of Staff, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, the Counselor to the President, the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Representative to the United Nations.

How does one become a member of the Cabinet?

The 15 Secretaries from the executive departments are appointed by the President, and they must be confirmed by a majority vote (51 votes) of the Senate. They cannot be a member of Congress or hold any other elected office. Cabinet appointments are for the duration of the administration, but the President may dismiss any member at any time, without approval of the Senate. In addition, they are expected to resign when a new President takes office.

The following is a list of the current heads of the 15 executive department agencies, their department, when that department was created, and a brief description of the department from the United States Government Manual. The list is organized by order of succession. More information about each department can be found in the United States Government Manual on GPO Access. Clicking on the name of the department will take you to that department's Web site.



Secretary of State

Department of State (1789):

Handles foreign affairs and relationships with other nations. It makes recommendations on foreign policy, negotiates treaties, speaks for the United States in the United Nations, and represents the United States at international conferences.

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Secretary of the Treasury

Department of the Treasury (1789):

Formulates and recommends economic, financial, tax, and fiscal policies; serves as financial agent for the US Government; enforces the law; and manufactures coins and currency.

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Secretary of Defense

Department of Defense (1947):

Provides the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of the United States. The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard, and Reserve Forces are part of this Department.

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**Attorney General****Department of Justice** (1870):

Enforces and defends the Federal laws of the United States by preventing and controlling crime, seeking just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior; and enforcing the Nation's immigration laws.

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**Secretary of the Interior****Department of the Interior** (1849):

Oversees national conservation efforts and is responsible for most of our nationally owned public lands, natural resources, and wildlife.

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**Secretary of Agriculture****Department of Agriculture** (1862):

Ensures a safe, affordable, nutritious, and accessible food supply; cares for agriculture, forest, and range lands; supports the development of rural communities; and provides economic development for farmers and rural residents.

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**Secretary of Commerce****Department of Commerce** (1903):

Promotes economic, business, and job opportunities for all Americans. It is responsible for all copyrights, patents, and trademarks. It also plays a major role in Federal government matters related to oceans, weather, and technology.

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**Secretary of Labor****Department of Labor** (1913):

Oversees the interests of US workers by protecting workers' wages, health and safety employment and pension rights; promoting equal employment opportunity; and administering job training, unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation programs.

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**Secretary of Health & Human Services****Department of Health and Human Services** (1953):

Protects the health of all Americans and provides essential human services. The duties of the Department include conducting medical research, preventing the outbreak of diseases, assuring the safety of food and drugs; administering financial assistance for low income families; protecting against child and domestic abuse; and protecting against drug abuse.

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**Secretary of Housing & Development****Department of Housing and Urban Development** (1965):

Aims to create a decent, safe, and sanitary home and living environment for every American. It is responsible for home ownership programs, providing housing assistance for low income persons, helping the homeless, and promoting growth and development in distressed neighborhoods.

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**Secretary of Transportation****Department of Transportation** (1966):

Ensures a fast, safe, efficient, accessible and convenient transportation system. This includes transportation of people and goods by car, plane, train, and ship. It is also responsible for maintaining the Federal highway system.

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**Secretary of Energy****Department of Energy** (1977):

Researches and develops reliable energy systems that are friendly to the environment, but are not too expensive. It is also responsible for the Nation's nuclear energy and weapons technologies.

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Secretary of Education

Department of Education (1979):

Establishes guidelines and provides leadership to address American education. It helps local communities meet the needs of their students. It also helps individuals pay for college and prepare for employment.

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Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Department of Veterans Affairs (1988):

Acts as the principal advocate for veterans and their families ensuring that they receive medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials recognizing their service.

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Secretary of Homeland Security

Department of Homeland Security (2003):

Works to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage from potential attacks and natural disasters.